

1.0 INTRODUCTION

After the record-breaking wildfire season of 2000, Congress approved funds for federal and state agencies, and local communities, to develop and implement a national strategy for preventing the loss of life, natural resources, private property and livelihoods. The result of that planning and preparation is commonly known as the “National Fire Plan” (NFP) (U.S. Department of Agriculture [USDA] 2002). This plan was approved in September 2000 and is fully titled *Managing the Impacts of Wildfire on Communities and the Environment: A Report to the President in Response to the Wildfires of 2000*. The NFP includes five key points: firefighting preparedness, rehabilitation and restoration of burned areas, reduction of hazardous fuels, community assistance, and accountability. In 2001, Congress released another directive requiring the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior to engage Governors in the development of a National ten-year comprehensive strategy that would implement the NFP. For this effort, *The Idaho Statewide Implementation Strategy for the National Fire Plan* (Kempthorne et al. 2002) was developed. It was approved in May 2002 and involved the cooperation and collaboration of the Secretary of Interior, the Secretary of Agriculture, the Governors of Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, and Oregon, and the Director of the Council on Environmental Quality. The primary goals of the Idaho Plan are to: improve prevention and suppression of wildfire, reduce hazardous fuels, restore fire-adapted ecosystems, and promote community assistance.

The purpose of this mitigation plan is to identify and mitigate wildfire risks and negative consequences in communities and Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas of Butte County, Idaho. A WUI is an area where improved property and wildland fuels meet at a well defined boundary. The mitigation plan addresses Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) criteria contained in 44 CFR Part 201.6 and follows guidance from the *Idaho Statewide Implementation Strategy for the National Fire Plan* (Kempthorne et al. 2002) by: 1) identifying fire hazards that affect Fremont County and its residents, 2) providing sufficient information to make mitigation decisions, 3) discussing existing resources that are most current and best available and, 4) describing the process used to develop the plan, including how it was prepared, who was involved in the process, and how the public was involved. The mitigation plan will be maintained, that is, monitored, evaluated, and updated annually within a five-year cycle, by a group of Butte County residents or Wildland Fire Interagency Group. The group will be represented by agencies countywide with wildland fire suppression experience and responsibilities. County Commissioners will take the lead for monitoring the plan while the other group members evaluate the risks and vulnerabilities to wildland fire within their area of concern. The maintenance process will allow local governments, when appropriate, to incorporate the requirements of the plan into other planning mechanisms such as comprehensive or capital improvement plans which will include public participation through scheduled hearings and meetings.

The purpose of this risk assessment and mitigation plan is to identify and mitigate wildfire risks and negative consequences in communities and Wildland Urban Interface areas of Butte County, Idaho in accordance with the Idaho Statewide Implementation Strategy for the National Fire Plan. The Wildland Urban Interface is defined as the residential and supporting commercial land uses intermingled with range commercial uses and wildlands (Hodgson 2001).

This Butte County Fire Risk Assessment and Mitigation Plan is comprised of four sections – Introduction, General Description, Existing Conditions, and Specific Mitigations. These sections summarize (1) the legal requirements and rationale for developing the plan, (2) the uniqueness of Butte County relative to the diverse land ownership, economics and social structure, (3) the fire hazards and risk assessments relative to different areas within Butte County, (4) the fire mitigation goals and their actions based on public involvement, and (5) mitigation costs, monitoring and evaluation.